

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7004

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 9980

FOLLOWING TEL SENT ACTION NEW DELHI INFO BOMBAY MADRAS
DTD JULY 7 REPEATED TO YOU

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L CALCUTTA 1605

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PORS, IN

SUBJ: SHAKE-UP IN WEST BENGAL POLICE, RANJIT GUPTA OUT

1. CHIEF SECRETARY B.R. GUPTA MET WITH THE PRESS YESTERDAY TO ANNOUNCE TRANSFER ON WEST BENGAL INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE RANJIT GUPTA TO THE CIVIL DEFENSE ADMINISTRATION AS "OFFICER ON SPECIAL DUTY" AND APPOINTMENT OF INIL CHAUDHURY, CURRENTLY POLICE COMMISSIONER FOR CALCUTTA, AS THE NEW INSPECTOR GENERAL. HEAD OF THE INTELLIGENCE BRANCH, DEPUTY INSPECTOR GENERAL SATYA BASU, IS BEING APPOINTED POLICE COMMISSIONER FOR CALCUTTA REPLACING CHAUDHURY.

2. RANJIT GUPTA HAS BEEN INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE SINCE 1972 AND HAD A LONG, BRILLIANT AND AT TIMES CONTROVERSIAL CAREER IN POLICE WORK IN WEST BENGAL BEFORE THAT. HE GAINED NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FAME AS THE MAN WHO BROKE THE BACK OF NAXALITE TERRORISM IN A BLOODY NO HOLDS BARRED BATTLE STRETCHING FROM 1971 TO 1973. AS MIGHT BE IMAGINED, IN THE COURSE OF HIS CAREER GUPTA HAS MADE MANY ENEMIES; FOR EXAMPLE, HE AND CHAUDHURY ARE COMMONLY HELD TO BE BITTER
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ARCH RIVALS, THOUGH THEY GIVE NO HINT OF THIS IN PUBLIC.

BUT GUPTA'S FORMIDABLE TALENTS AS A POLITICAL AND BUREAUCRATIC MANEUVERER HAD UP TO NOW KEPT HIS OPPONENTS AT BAY.

3. GUPTA'S NEW POSITION IS OBVIOUSLY A NON-JOB (THOUGH THERE IS ALREADY SPECULATION THAT IT MAY BE ONLY A COVER FOR HIS TRANSFER TO A SENIOR POSITION IN GOI INTELLIGENCE). WHILE HE HAD TALKED BRIEFLY OF RETIREMENT LAST YEAR, AND MOMENTARILY EVEN HELD THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF A LARGE GOWB RUN FIRM CONCURRENTLY WITH HIS DUTIES AS IG OF POLICE, IT WAS GENERALLY BELIEVED THAT GUPTA WAS NOW SET TO STAY ON AS IG UNTIL HE REACHED THE MANDATORY RETIREMENT AGE OF 58 TWO YEARS FROM NOW. THIS WAS THE IMPRESSION HE HAD GIVEN US IN OUR CONTACTS WITH HIM IN RECENT MONTHS. JUST WHAT HAPPENED IS STILL VERY MUCH A SUBJECT OF SPECULATION AND CONFLICTING REPORTS. AN AUTHORITATIVE SENIOR SOURCE, WHO GAVE US THE NEWS OF GUPTA'S TRANSFER YESTERDAY EVENING (I.E. TWELVE HOURS BEFORE IT CAME OUT IN THE PRESS) TOLD US THAT THE SHAKE UP WAS THE WORK OF KAMAL NATH, THE YOUNG PUNJABI INDUSTRIALIST SCHOOL MATE OF SANJAY GANDHI'S WHO IS REPUTED TO "RUN THINGS" FOR SANJAY HERE. A STORY IN MORE GENERAL CIRCULATION IS THAT A COLDNESS HAD DEVELOPED IN RECENT MONTHS BETWEEN GUPTA AND CHIEF MINISTER RAY; SUPERFICIALLY THAT MAY SOUND MORE PLAUSIBLE, BUT IT HARDLY SEEMS LIKELY THAT A CRAFTY TACTICIAN LIKE GUPTA WOULD ALLOW DETERIORATION IN HIS RELATIONS WITH ONE OF HIS MAJOR POWER SOURCES.

4. IF IT SHOULD TURN OUT THAT GUPTA HAS BEEN OUSTED BY NATH, PRESUMABLY ACTING ON SANJAY'S INSTRUCTIONS OR AT LEAST WITH HIS CONCURRENCE, THIS WOULD RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT CHIEF MINISTER RAY'S AUTHORITY AND HIS CONTINUED LONGEVITY IN OFFICE. IT MAY BE POSSIBLE TO LEARN MORE IN THE COMING DAYS, IF A TORRENT OF RUMOR AND IMAGINATIVE SPECULATION DOES NOT ENTIRELY OBSCURE THE FACTS. IN ANY EVENT, IT SEEMS SAFE TO SAY THAT RANJIT GUPTA'S DEPARTURE FROM THE WEST BENGAL POLICE MARKS THE END OF AN ERA EVEN IF IT HAS NO BROADER POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE. THOUGH BY NOW HE MAY HAVE ACQUIRED MORE DETRACTORS THAN ADMIRERS, GUPTA HAD A STYLE, A BRILLIANCE AND AN URBANITY UNMATCHED BY ANYONE AT THE SENIOR LEVELS OF THE BUREAUCRACY OR POLITICS IN THIS STATE OR IN EASTERN INDIA FOR THAT MATTER. CHAUDHURY IS A CAPABLE OFFICER, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND HE HAS BEEN FRIENDLY AND ACCESSIBLE TO CONGEN PERSONNEL, BUT ANYONE WHO FOLLOWS IN GUPTA'S FOOTSTEPS WILL NECESSARILY SEEM LACK-LUSTRE. KORN
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SAXBE

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